

THE METROPOLITAN POLICE DEPARTMENT'S RESPONSE TO THE REPORT ON RACIAL DISPARITIES IN ARRESTS IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA RELEASED BY THE WASHINGTON LAWYERS' COMMITTEE (WLC)

The Washington Lawyers' Committee has looked at an important issue, and drawn some thoughtful preliminary conclusions. The criminal justice system and academia have long examined the complex relationship between arrest rates and certain variables such as race, poverty, education, and/or employment.

I believe that the most important factor in our success in decreasing violence in the District has been strengthening the relationship between police and the community. With that said, MPD agrees with the Committee's conclusion that more research needs to be done to examine these trends. MPD also agrees and welcomes the recommendation for further in depth discussion on these important issues to determine their impact on public safety in the District. I am committed to maintaining the strong community trust that we have developed over the past seven years of my tenure.

SOME ADDITIONAL THINGS TO CONSIDER...

- 1. According to the report, "The Committee seeks to be part of a city that can embrace the safest, healthiest and most effective ways to solve public safety and social policy challenges."***

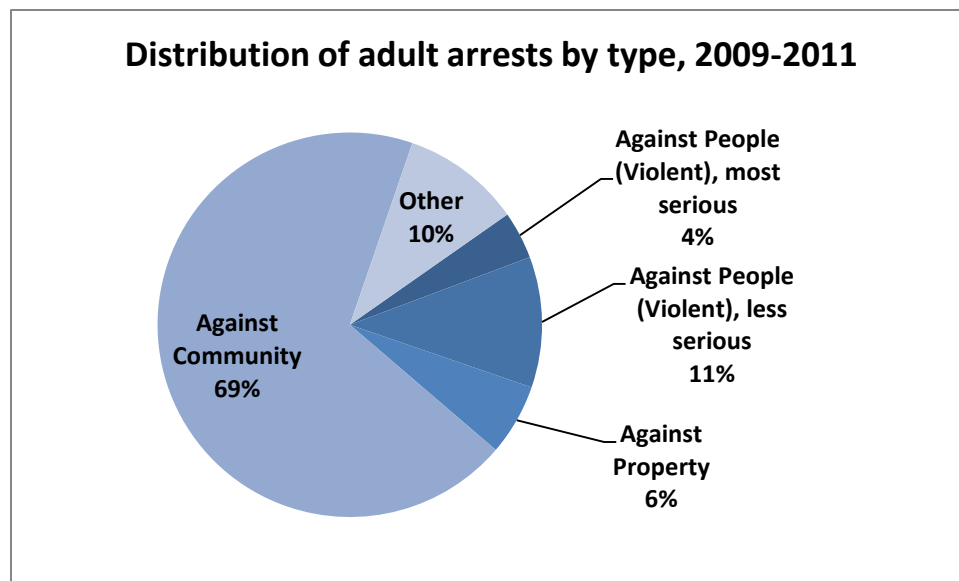
We wholeheartedly agree. The issues raised in WLC's report are extremely important, and equally complex, with researchers and criminal justice professionals often citing other socioeconomic variables as well, such as employment, income, and education. Thoughtful examination of these issues must include a review and discussion of all the salient factors.

- 2. According to the report, "While there are about as many African Americans aged 18 or older (47.6%) as there are adult whites (42%) living in this city, eight of 10 adults arrested for crime in Washington are African American."***

These numbers can certainly serve as starting point for constructive discussions among concerned members of the community, law enforcement, and other city leaders. But again, those discussions should include further examination of the many different factors that influence crime and arrest, prior to drawing firm conclusions as to the reasons why one group is not proportionate to the other. Comparison of proportions alone is not a holistic or thorough enough approach to examining this important issue. We are not aware of any agreement among community members, criminal justice professionals, or academics that says that arrest rates should reflect the proportion of residents of a city. The idea that the demographics of arrests should reflect the same proportion of the resident population only seems to apply to race, as police are rarely questioned about why we don't arrest more women or senior citizens. It's also important to remember that two out of every 10 people arrested in DC don't even live in the city.

3. According to the report, “More than 19 out of 20 arrests in Washington, D.C. were for nonviolent offenses.”

The WLC report downplays the seriousness of the arrests in the analysis and incorrectly calls the arrests studied “non-violent” arrests. WLC removed the arrests for crimes for the most serious violent offenses: homicide, rape, robbery, and aggravated assault, but the remaining categories of arrests include some violent and many serious charges.



- **15% of all the arrests were violent crimes against people** – 4% were the most serious charges that were omitted from the analysis (homicide, rape, robbery & aggravated assault), and 11% were less serious crimes against people, including other assaults and sex offenses.
- 6% were crimes against property – ranging from the most serious (like burglary, arson, theft, UUV) to less serious (vandalism, destruction of property).
- The majority of arrests (69%) are crimes against the community. This includes serious charges, such as **weapons possession, prostitution and commercialized vice, drugs (20%), and fugitives**, as well as disorderly conduct, traffic, vending, liquor laws, etc. This is not surprising as the majority of our workload relates to addressing community concerns.

4. In a footnote on page 7 of their report, the authors mention that the arrest data included other agencies, but that the report chose to refer to all arrests as “MPD arrests.”

It is important to note that for all arrests, 13 percent are made by other law enforcement agencies. This is higher for **traffic violations (19% are other agencies)** and **disorderly conduct/POCA (18%)**. However, this is lower for some other offenses, such as Other Assaults (8%) and Drugs (6%).

5. *The report suggests that the police are targeting African-American members of the community for minor offenses.*

In no way has the department prioritized minor arrests over serious crime. Our officers are called upon to deal with many types of circumstances and scenarios. Of our sworn members, 77 percent are assigned to the Police Districts. These members deal primarily with the crimes that we see happening on the street and many of their interactions and arrests are driven by calls for service made by members of the community.

6. *According to the report, “While there were significant disparities in drug arrests between the two groups, national drug use survey data shows little disparity in drug use between whites and African Americans.”*

The WLC cites findings from the National Survey on Drug Use and Health as a benchmark for the racial analysis of drug arrests in Washington, D.C. But again, while the numbers cited by WLC can certainly serve as starting point for constructive dialogue, those discussions should include further examination of the many other factors that influence drug use, abuse, and addiction. For example, in addition to race, the National Survey also looked at respondents’ education level and employment status. Based on the survey’s findings, both education and employment are more closely correlated with illicit drug use than race. While the WLC report does not mention this information, we hope that future discussions will include these and the other important factors.

7. *WLC concludes their report by making several recommendations, including additional examination and research, policy reforms, and community review.*

We agree that further research is needed. This should include an examination of the many different factors that are known to impact crime and arrest, including education, employment, income, and access to services, to name a few. The data related to these factors is widely available for review (graphical examples for employment and education are included below). We look forward to being a part of discussions with the community. We also understand that good policies have a lasting and positive impact on services.

We are committed to working with advocacy organizations and our community partners on this important issue. MPD prides itself on providing high quality police services to all members of the community, and we will continue to carry out that important mission.

Table 1: 2012 District of Columbia Unemployment Rate by Ward. *Source: DC Department of Employment Services, Office of Labor Market Research and Information.*

January 2012				Unemployment
Ward	Labor Force	Employment	Unemployment	Rate
1	49,252	44,952	4,300	8.7
2	49,361	46,906	2,455	5.0
3	54,034	52,614	1,420	2.6
4	44,310	40,644	3,666	8.3
5	37,016	31,934	5,082	13.7
6	43,685	39,239	4,446	10.2
7	35,979	29,948	6,031	16.8
8	31,325	23,528	7,797	24.9

Table 2: Educational Attainment by Ward. *Source: The Education of D.C.: How Washington D.C.'s investments in education can help increase public safety; Justice Policy Institute.*

